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WASHINGTON REPORT
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REAGAN PLANS DRASTIC NEW HEALTH CUTS

I was recently able to obtain advance copies of the health care proposals President Ronald Reagan plans to make in the next few weeks. I was horrified at the extent to which the President is prepared to go. The proposed cuts were especially shocking in view of the substantial cuts made last year. Clearly Reagan sees health programs as areas to be used to offset the massive budget deficit now looming.

In keeping with the pattern established last year, the cuts hit precisely those recipients least able to defend themselves politically. The President will propose Medi-Cal cuts of 3% on top of a 4% cut last year. Add these cuts to the absence of any funds to cope with inflation in the health care sector of 10% (at the very least) and you have a real loss in federal money for health care for the poor of a whopping 17%.

The President will also be calling for additional sharp cutbacks in the Medicare program. The documents I have studied indicate plans to double the out-of-pocket expenses for typical Medicare patients' hospital stays.

Last year I was deeply gratified to have been able to hold to a minimum Reagan Administration cutbacks in the federal health programs I deem of the most critical importance -- childhood immunization, family planning, nutritional aid for pregnant women and young children, and community health centers. I was deeply dismayed to discover that the Reagan Administration will attack every one of these programs again this year.

As I told the Los Angeles Times, I regard these reductions as both foolish and cruel. I also regard many of them as outright efforts to

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deceive the American public. Many of these cutbacks will not save the taxpayers any money. They will simply shift the burden of health care costs from one government level to the other.

Here in Los Angeles, county government is already reeling from the impact Reagan's cuts have had on expenses at our county hospitals. If further cuts are enacted, we will not be able to maintain even minimal services at county facilities without additional county taxes. Similarly, if federal Medi-Cal funds are reduced the program will collapse unless new state taxes make up the revenue loss.

Politicians, journalists, and citizens fortunate enough not to need health care help from government agencies are debating the Reagan cuts. Meanwhile, an enormous amount of human suffering is going on around us. Patients denied routine care are being sentenced to acute illnesses and even death. Competent health professionals are fleeing the public sector in a mood of bitterness and despair. Others are being driven from their jobs by budget cuts. Many of these people will be so disillusioned and apprehensive that they will never return to work for public agencies.

What course will the President take if the current recession worsens (as many economists expect), and lasts for an extended period of time? What cuts will he propose should next year's deficit be \$200 billion dollars rather than the \$110 billion anticipated for this year? How far will he go in his efforts to use the weakest, poorest, and most disadvantaged people in the society to correct the economic disaster his Administration has brought on us?

I will continue to fight President Reagan's health care cuts every inch of the way. I fear neither my efforts nor those of like-minded Congressmen will suffice. Voters in the 1982 elections are going to have to join us in repudiating an Administration which has begun to destroy sound and compassionate health policies it has taken half a century to develop.